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ABSTRACT

The twelve items in this annotated bibliography are entries in the ERIC system concerning communication between principals and teachers, principals and students, and managers and subordinates. Research studies cited center on organizational communications and decision-making processes and structures, the importance of proper leave-taking techniques, factors that influence the quality of communications, and the effect of verbal behavior on school climate. Other articles included emphasize improving a manager's face-to-face skills, increasing the number and quality of personal contacts with students and faculty, breaking down communications blockages, examining sources of communications error, and satisfying subordinates' "higher needs" for involvement. (JM)

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Communications Skills

1 **Batten, Joe D.** "Face-to-Face Communication." *The Personnel Administrator,* 21, 2 (February 1976), pp. 51-54. EJ 153 582.

Batten, the author of a best-selling management book, believes that survey results and the discussions of management researchers indicate that "the manager's *total* effectiveness rises or falls directly in proportion to his 'face-to-face' skills—his interpersonal insights and actions." In this article he outlines the essential elements of truly effective one-to-one relationships.

First of all, a leader should remain both vulnerable and open. That is, a leader should remain flexible and responsive to new ideas and be willing to "stick his neck out" at times. This kind of open posture is essential for a leader's continued growth and ability to relate empathetically with others. "The defensive, invulnerable person," Batten notes, "plateaus early in life in terms of growth, vitality, and the capacity to obtain 'followership'."

The manager should avoid what Batten calls "negative listening . . . the tendency to hear the other person out and then say what you were going to say anyway." And he should be aware of "body English," but be careful not to "judge another according to past biases or stereotypes."

Batten encourages leaders to avoid the tendency to label, box, or categorize others. Rather, "we should try to see the other person as being in a state of flow, of ongoing growth." Instead of limiting a person by looking for his or her weaknesses, a leader should concentrate on the person's strengths and expect full use of these strengths. This, says Batten, fulfills in the other person a central human requirement—the need to feel in some way significant as a person.

2 **Gray, John W.,** and **Ward, Allan L.** "Improving Communications Between Student and Principal." *NASSP Bulletin,* 58, 384 (October 1974), pp. 3-12. EJ 103 473.

Students tend to equate the amount of time their principal spends with them with the amount of care he or she has for them. Thus Gray and Ward encourage principals to increase the number and quality of personal contacts they make with students and to get to know the concerns of the "inner student."

Communication quality can be increased by such techniques as paraphrasing and feedback. For example, a principal should encourage students to reflect on and respond to statements he makes. In turn, he should listen carefully to what a student is saying and then attempt to paraphrase what that student has said.

Principals should attempt to initiate dialogue with students about the concerns and questions that most occupy their minds. One technique for getting to know the real interests of students is to ask them to write on unsigned papers the questions that most deeply concern them. When the authors did this with several classes of college freshmen, they found that the students were thinking about such basic issues as the purpose of life, the reasons for wars, and the way to personal happiness. The authors ranked the varied questions according to how often they were asked and gave the resulting "concern profile" back to the group.

Gray and Ward believe that administrators can take a long step toward improving communication by realizing that students want dialogue about serious human problems, instead of either pat answers or avoidance of the issues. To facilitate such dialogue, they recommend that principals voice their own concerns about some of the issues that students mention in their concern profile.

3 **Ingari, Sandro.** "A Case Study in Human Relations." *NASSP Bulletin,* 60, 401 (September 1976), pp. 103-6. EJ 153 064.

In this article, Ingari constructs a fictitious situation in which principal-faculty relations are very strained. In the process of writing the principal out of this dilemma, he outlines several useful techniques for improving interpersonal relations between principal and faculty.

Ingari's main argument is that by increasing the opportunities for informal contact between principal and faculty, the level of mutual trust and understanding between them can be greatly increased. He outlines several ways that a principal can increase his or her level of contact with faculty, while deemphasizing his authoritarian role.

For example, the principal can use attendance at extracurricular events, such as concerts, plays, and sporting events, to increase his opportunities for informal dialogue with coaches and faculty members. Or he may make it a point to eat his lunch with the faculty rather than in his office. One of the simplest techniques is to show an interest in faculty members by inquiring, whenever practical, about husbands, wives, or children.

Ingari also suggests that a principal set up weekly informal "rap sessions" with teachers in which he would concentrate on *listening* to faculty members' opinions and grievances. He might also leave his office door open whenever possible and encourage instructors

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to drop by for informal chats.

Small changes in behavior such as these, concludes Ingari, can do much to improve the effectiveness of an educational leader, while improving the general communications climate of his school.

4 **Orlando, Joseph M.** "Do You Lock Out Associates?" *School Business Affairs*, 41, 2 (February 1975), p. 35. EJ 110 966.

A "lock-out," as defined by Orlando, is any behavior by a school administrator that blocks needed communication. Lock-outs can include not responding to inquiries by fellow administrators or subordinates, not communicating with fellow workers when needed, or assuming that others have information when they don't.

For example, an administrator can practice lock-out simply by not telling his secretary where he'll be. Or he can file, upon receipt, all directives that come across his desk, without making them available to those persons they affect. Or he may fail to acknowledge another person when he benefits from that person's services.

Other common forms of lock-out are practiced when administrators do not read their professional literature, fail to attend state, regional, and national conferences, or when they do not read changes in laws that affect their school district. Orlando enumerates several other varieties of lock-out, while warning against the negative consequences of such communication blockages.

5 **Pascale, Richard Tanner.** "Zen and the Art of Management." *Harvard Business Review*, 56, 2 (March-April 1978), pp. 153-62. EJ 173 606.

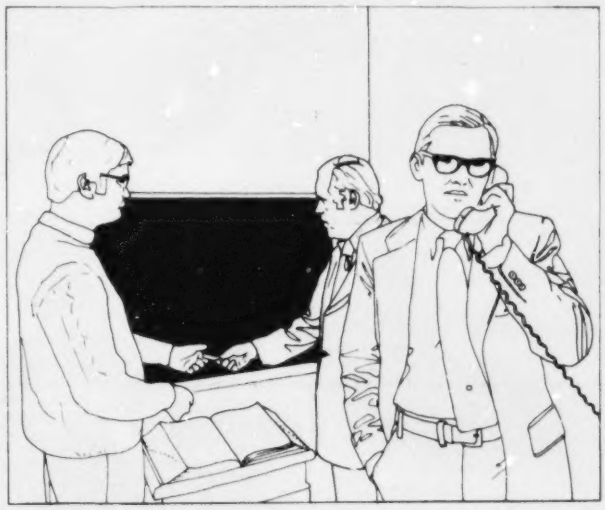
"Successful managers, *regardless of nationality*, share certain common characteristics that are related to subtleties of the communications process." This is perhaps the most significant finding of Pascale's study of Japanese companies, which he conducted to determine the ways in which the companies' communications and decision-making processes contributed to their high performance. In this article, Pascale describes several of the subtle communication techniques employed by successful managers in both Japan and the United States—techniques collectively referred to as the "art of management."

One such technique is the use of ambiguity as a management tool; instead of pushing for premature solutions to complex problems, a successful manager sometimes permits the situations to remain ambiguous until they "take clearer shape or reach an accommodation of their own." This Pascale contrasts with the manager who prematurely makes a decision in a still ambiguous situation, which "freezes" the natural evolution of the situation. There are of course times when "being explicit and decisive is not only helpful but necessary"; however, there is a greater advantage in having a "dual frame of reference."

Ambiguity can also have value when criticizing a subordinate's work. The skilled manager carefully constructs his or her message, coming "close enough to the point to ensure that the subordinate gets the message but not so close as to 'crowd' him and cause defensiveness." This approach, states Pascale, allows the worker to retain his pride, while avoiding the alienation that often accompanies confrontation.

Pascale also discusses the value of "implied recognition" as a powerful incentive for workers. Seeking another's opinion, for example, tacitly "communicates recognition and respect for his insight. So does an invitation to participate in a significant meeting from which the person might otherwise have been excluded."

The successful manager, says Pascale, sees himself not only as an accomplisher of certain organizational tasks, but also as "an essential intermediary in the social fabric." He values a worker for his uniqueness and humanness in addition to valuing him for the function he performs; that is, the manager is attentive to both the "man" and the "bottom line." Pascale illustrates many of his concepts in this interesting article by contrasting Eastern and Western modes of thinking.



6 **Patterson, Walter G.** "To the Principal: Are You There?" *NASSP Bulletin*, 61, 407 (March 1977), pp. 104-6. EJ 160 412.

Leaders should operate within an "open door policy," providing frequent and regular opportunities for access. An available and visible leader provides psychological assurance that the leader "is there" should problems arise. This ultimately enhances the leader's effectiveness.

Patterson offers school administrators several suggestions for increasing availability. A principal can remain in the outer office at the opening and closing of school so students and teachers may see and talk with him or her. A superintendent might spend an occasional lunch hour in the faculty lunch room. A superintendent or principal can provide "open hours" in which any staff member, teacher, parent, or student may see him.

The author also provides several contemporary and historical examples supporting the idea that leadership is enhanced through the increased availability of the leader.

7 **Pulley, Jerry L.** "The Principal and Communication: Some Points of Interference." *NASSP Bulletin*, 59, 387 (January 1975), pp. 50-54. EJ 110 352.

The "classic linear model" of communication has five components: source, message, medium, receiver, and reaction. Breakdowns in communication can occur at any of these points, says Pulley, and in a variety of ways. For example, the source, which is the individual or group with information to share, may be viewed by others in a wide variety of ways, thus inhibiting the accurate transmission of the message.

The way the message is constructed or encoded can also lead to misunderstanding. "Over-use of education jargon," for example, can easily lose a listener, while the use of "sensitive" words and phrases tends to alienate some audiences. To avoid the latter difficulty, Pulley recommends that terms such as "truant" and "lazy" be replaced by the euphemisms "absent without permission" and "can do more when he tries."

The medium is simply the delivery system for a message, whether it be conversation, electronic device, or printed matter. Errors at this

stage are very common, so Pulley recommends that messages be sent through more than one channel whenever possible. Verbal conversation is by far the most effective means of communication, says Pulley, because "it allows for significant non-verbal communication" as well as direct feedback from the listener.

How a receiver interprets a message is another common source of interference. Often a receiver is biased toward the source, or a message is interpreted the way the receiver *wants* to interpret it. The attitudinal set of the receiver, then, should be an important consideration when constructing a message.

Pulley concludes by recommending that the principal build an awareness of the possible sources of communication error in his organization, so that he can design "a more effective communication system."

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8 "Research Interpersonal Relations: How to Say Goodbye." *Nation's Schools and Colleges*, 1, 2 (October 1974), pp. 54-56. EJ 105 881.

How do you end a conversation? According to the findings of a research team at Purdue University, most people don't just shake hands and say "goodbye." Instead, they end the conversation with words of reinforcement and agreement, such as "yeah," "right," "sure," or "okay." It seems that "most people instinctively understand that agreement is the 'proper' way to end a conversation."

Even stronger ways to signal the end of a conversation, however, are nonverbal clues. The first sign is often a forward lean, followed by a break in eye contact. But, "the surest clue that a conversation is over is what the researchers call 'left positioning'—the leave-taker actually points his legs or feet toward the door."

Leave-taking can be a fairly complex ritual of verbal and nonverbal clues—approaching a "veritable song and dance." Since misunderstandings of the signals often occur, it behooves the administrator to build a good understanding of this complex and subtle behavior.

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9 **Rogus, Joseph**, and **Matczynski, Thomas.** "Principal-Central Office Communication." *NASSP Bulletin*, 61, 405 (January 1977), pp. 37-43. EJ 158 815.

The traditional, hierarchical model of school-system organization may be responsible for communication problems within the system. Rogus and Matczynski believe that this type of organization does not satisfy members' "higher needs," needs that are satisfied by shared decision-making and involvement in the development of the organization. If satisfaction at this "motivation level" is not achieved, workers are likely to express frustration at lower levels by organizing and demanding job security, fringe benefits, and other tangibles. On the other hand, satisfaction of these higher needs "has been shown to relate significantly to improved employee performance."

Part of the trouble with the hierarchical system is its pyramidal structure, with different levels connoting superior-inferior relationships. Another problem is the "rule" of the hierarchical game that problems are "symptoms of weakness and weak people never move up the pyramid." The result of these problems is the "isolated principal"—inhibited in vertical communications with the central office and in horizontal communications with his peers.

As one means of implementing change in this kind of system, the authors encourage adoption of team management concepts. Team meetings would provide opportunities for greater communication between the central office and principals, while the inclusion of principals in decision-making would engender feelings of belonging and contributing to the organization.

The authors also suggest that principals meet together regularly in support groups of eight to ten to identify and discuss problems in an attempt to relieve horizontal isolation. Most important, however, is their recommendation that everyone in the school hierarchy make a conscious effort to change the attitudinal sets that hold the hierarchy intact.

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10 **Schott, James L.** "The Practitioner's Guide to Research Communications: The Principal and Students." *NASSP Bulletin*, 57, 377 (December 1973), pp. 86-90. EJ 090 447.

The principal should be fully aware of the factors that influence the quality of his or her communication with students. Schott here describes a study of the relationships between a number of student attributes and the quality of communication between student and principal as perceived by the students.

A Purdue University researcher conducted the study in a large urban high school with a wide range of social status levels and a black population of 11 percent. The attributes under investigation were race, grade index, curriculum, sex, activities index, and social status. A thirty-item questionnaire was used to measure student perceptions of three communication dimensions: the climate for student-principal communications, the opportunity for communication input, and how well students were kept informed.

Not surprisingly, the study revealed that white students, female students, and students with a high involvement in activities all perceived better communications in all categories than did their counterparts.

The findings concerning the effects of the students' social status were particularly interesting. As might be expected, students lowest on the social position scale were less satisfied with all three communication dimensions. High social status students, however, while considering the communications climate better than any other student social class, also perceived a very low opportunity for

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input, while middle-class students perceived the highest opportunity.

The most interesting finding was that most students perceived their opportunity for input as far better than either the general climate for communications or their level of being informed. This finding, suggests Schott, "might reflect a general attitude of student skepticism relative to the actual impact they might have upon their school life."

One of the key implications of this study, says Schott, is "the need for each principal to assess the status of principal-student communications within his building." Being aware of the variables in the communications process is a first step toward understanding students and their perceptions.

11 **Taylor, Richard L.** *The Communication Structure of a Large Urban Secondary School.* 1971. 22 pages. ED 123 810.

Taylor describes a method he used to determine the communication characteristics of Rainier Beach High School in Seattle, Washington, where he is principal. He then discusses the general applicability of this method to other organizations.

The method Taylor used assumes that organizational structure can be characterized "in terms of communication events which connect pairs of individuals." When all these "units" of connection are determined, communication structure for the whole organization can be mapped and studied. Thus Taylor's main data-gathering tool was a simple questionnaire that was distributed to all staff, asking each to check off the frequency, subject matter, and importance of their contact with every other staff member over a given period of time.

The data so obtained were subjected to statistical analysis to determine the structure of the communications network, including the number and identity of "key communicators" and "isolates." Since the questionnaire was administered three times covering a two-year data period, changes in the quantity and subject matter of conversation could be detected, as well as changes in the network itself. For example, Taylor traced an increase in staff discussion about the school's participation in a model schools project to the response to workshops on the subject.

Taylor applied statistical methods developed by several organizational theorists. He describes these methods in some detail and provides a sample questionnaire. The costs of administering the questionnaire and analyzing the data, says Taylor, are nominal. He recommends use of the method whenever it is of value to know the communication structure of an organization.

12 **Valentine, Jerry W.; Tate, Bradford L.; Seagren, Alan T.;** and **Lammel, John A.** "Administrative Verbal Behavior: What You Say Does Make a Difference." *NASSP Bulletin,* 59, 395 (December 1975), pp. 67-74. EJ 135 571.

There is a significant relationship between what an administrator says and the "climate" or "tone" of the administrator's school. The authors here discuss the results of a study in which the specific verbal behaviors of high school principals were correlated with different perceptions of the school by teachers, parents, and students.

The study revealed that "each administrator was consistently 'direct' or 'indirect' in the verbal behaviors he utilized." Direct behavior includes direction-giving, emphasizing main points, statements of decision, and criticism, while indirect behavior refers to the expression and acceptance of feeling, opinions, and values and the use of humor.

Surprisingly, the study showed that "the more direct the principal, the more positive the attitudes of teachers, students, and parents" toward the school. For example, in schools where the principals were more direct, "the students perceived the schools as having an atmosphere where members of the organization assisted each other, provided useful services, and stressed group-centered social activities." At the same time, the principal's direct verbal behavior provoked feelings of constraint on personal development. In other words, direct verbal behavior stimulated perceptions of a group-centered, goal-oriented organization, but at the expense of perceptions of individual growth.

In contrast, indirect verbal behavior created an atmosphere of self-development. Increased expression and acceptance of opinions and values by the principal stimulated perceptions of a flexible organization that cared about individuals. Concomitantly, students perceived the school as having "little emphasis on achievement, hard work, and commitment to the goals of the school."

The authors make no judgment as to which kind of verbal behavior is better, but leave it to the administrator to decide the kind of environment preferred for his or her organization and then adjust verbal behavior accordingly.